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ABSTRACT

A study examined the attitudes of older college students toward older college instructors. A total of 262 students (who were either previously or currently enrolled in college classes) between the ages of 26 and 80 were asked to complete a 25-item attitude scale. The scale was designed to reflect respondents' attitudes concerning older teachers, older persons in general, and aging. Students were divided into the following age categories: between 26 and 49, 50 and 59, 60 and 69, 70 and 79, and over 80. When these groups were condensed into two general age groups, young and old, the older students seemed slightly better adjusted to aging. For the specific age levels, the scores obtained suggested that the extremes of the age spectrum (those aged 26 to 49 and those between the ages of 70 and 79) had significant differences in their mean adjustment to aging scores. With students between the ages of 26 and 49, a significant relationship emerged between preference for older teachers and aging adjustment score. Students aged 50 to 59 seemed to have the strongest preference for older teachers. In general, the older the student, the weaker the preference for older teachers. Moreover, higher levels of feeling comfortable with the idea of aging were strongly correlated with a weaker preference for older teachers. The study's results suggest that age does not appear as a significant variable in the older student's preferences for a college instructor. This report includes a copy of the survey instrument as well as a nine-page bibliography. (MN)

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AGE AND PREFERENCE FOR OLDER INSTRUCTORS

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AGE AND PREFERENCE

FOR OLDER INSTRUCTORS

Enid J. Pallant Portnoy

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the age preferences of older college students toward older college instructors. In order to evaluate the data, a younger student population (under 55) was employed for comparison purposes.

An original twenty-five item attitude scale was designed to reflect subjects' preference for older teachers, preference for older persons, and subjects' expressed adjustment to aging. Older students were divided into two major divisions: those age fifty plus and those age sixty plus, to identify any significant age group differences.

A total of 262 older students between the ages of 26 and 80 completed the instrument. Older students were defined as those persons previously or currently enrolled in college classes.

Three null hypotheses were generated. The first two hypotheses stated there were no significant differences in the mean preferences for older teachers or older persons scores between older and younger college students. As a result of *t* tests computed, the null hypotheses were accepted. The third null hypothesis stated there was no significant difference in the relationship between subjects' aging adjustment scores and their

mean scores on preference for older teachers. Pearson correlations confirmed the hypothesis as stated.

A significant relationship appeared between aging adjustment scores and age in general. With students 26-49 a significant relationship was found between preference for older teachers and aging adjustment scores. Students aged 50-59 seemed to have the strongest preference for older teachers. Generally, the older the student, the weaker was their preference for older teachers. In addition, the more comfortable students seemed to be in their adjustment to aging scores the weaker was their preference for older teachers.

Educators may wish to pay more attention to the older 50-59 age students when assigning them to college classroom teachers. The results of the study tend to suggest that age does not appear as a significant variable which accounts for the preferences of older college students regarding their college instructors.

AGE - INSTRUCTION SURVEY

INSTRUCTIONS: Please indicate the degree to which you agree with each of the following statements by circling the appropriate number in the left hand column. Circle "1" if you strongly agree, "2" if you agree, "3" if you are undecided or neutral, "4" if you disagree, and "5" if you strongly disagree. Please take care to respond to all of the items. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers and your participation in the project is completely voluntary.

1 2 3 4 5 1. An older teacher gains more of my confidence than a younger teacher in the classroom.

1 2 3 4 5 2. It is easier for me to receive information from people in my age group rather than from younger people.

1 2 3 4 5 3. I prefer to receive classroom instruction from someone near my own age.

1 2 3 4 5 4. It is confining to have to communicate only with those of similar age to myself.

1 2 3 4 5 5. People of different ages are not as satisfactory for me to converse with.

1 2 3 4 5 6. It is more satisfying for me if the person I converse with is closer to my age.

1 2 3 4 5 7. I prefer to receive information from someone close in age to myself.

1 2 3 4 5 8. The younger the teacher, the more confidence I have in his/her ability to communicate with me.

1 2 3 4 5 9. It is restrictive for me to accept teaching information from those who are not close to my age.

1 2 3 4 5 10. Older teachers make more competent instructors for my age group.

1 2 3 4 5 11. I prefer communicating with someone who is younger than my age group.

1 2 3 4 5 12. I am not confident about a person who communicates with me, if they are not close to my age.

1 2 3 4 5 13. I will accept information from those around me if they are close to my age.

1 2 3 4 5 14. Younger teachers cannot identify with my age group in a classroom as confidently as older teachers can.

1 2 3 4 5 15. The preferred communicator for me would be someone close to my age.

1 2 3 4 5 16. I often feel people put me in a less powerful position because of my age.

1 2 3 4 5 17. I believe I have made a satisfactory adjustment to aging.

1 2 3 4 5 18. I feel people treat me as someone who can contribute to society because of my age.

For the following questions, please circle the response that best describes you.

1 2 3 4 5 19. I am often dissatisfied with my own adjustment to the aging process.

1 2 3 4 5 20. I never feel as though I am taken advantage of by those younger than myself.

1 2 3 4 5 21. My sex is (1) male, (2) female

22. I consider myself to be:

(1) old (2) young old (3) old (4) middle aged (5) young

23. I would place myself in one of the following economic categories:

(1) upper class
(2) upper middle class
(3) middle class
(4) lower middle class
(5) lower class

24. I think of this stage in my life
(1) With some distress
(2) With some uneasiness
(3) With some relief
(4) With some contentment
(5) With some self-satisfaction

25. My age is:
(1) under 25,
(2) 26-49,
(3) 50-59,
(4) 60-69,
(5) 70-79,
(6) 80 or over

INTRODUCTION

Higher education has become aware of the older adult learner. With decreasing school enrollments, increasing population growth by senior citizens, and political presssures on academia to provide broader-based community education opportunities for all age groups, the doors of colleges are swinging open toward the older adult.

History of Educational Opportunities for Older Learners

In 1950 only 28% of persons over 65 were high school graduates .Researchers predicted at that time this figure would change signifcantly, jumping from a sex difference of 24.9% for males to a projected 40.4% for males in 1990,and to 34.3% for females in 1990 (U.S. Bureau of the Census,1970). The increasing numbers of senior citizens who make up 11% of the U.S. population (Population Estimates, 1980-1984) is critical in determining the kinds of educational opportunities available to this age group.

Since 1951 when the Adult Education Association was formed, educators have been aware of a new potential student population for their services. With the initiation in 1961 of the first White House Conference on Aging, the 1960's created models for continuing education programs for older persons. Beginning in 1965, government legislation and the Administration on Aging helped to co-ordinate federal programs for senior citizens.

A United States Senate Sub Committee suggested : " The development, conservation, and use of the potentials of the older memebers of our society should be one of the major concerns of society. Since education is one of the most significant means of achieving this purpose, it is important to consider the

educational implications inherent in the problems and opportunities of aging " (1960).

In 1972 the Basic Education Opportunity Grants Program began, emphasizing education as a basic right for people of all ages. In that very year the median number of years of education completed by persons over 65 was 9.1 years. Those between the ages of 55 and 64 were in a transition group; they had more schooling than their grandparents but less schooling than the 25-55 age group (Kalish, 1977). Between 1969 and 1975 those 55 and over who participated in other than full-time educational activities increased by 55.2% (Kalish, 1977) .

At present, we are in the midst of an increasing older population existing side-by-side with a shrinking population of children and youth. By the year 2000, person aged sixty-five and over will make up 13% of the population in the United States. The education of these senior citizens will become a dominant force in higher education for the next half-century (U.S. Bureau of the Census).

As Willard McGuire, Past President of the National Education Association recently emphasized, older adults can be the future ambassadors for education and its strongest advocates. However, if they do not experience satisfaction in the classroom, the impetus to encourage other seniors to pursue an education will likely diminish in intensity. For people sixty-five and over, community organizations, not educational institutions seem to be the largest type of agency catering to the senior citizens' needs. In 1972, 42% of the older population participated in educational activities through local community organizations with only 5% of the elderly enrolled in colleges and universities (Never Too Old To Learn, 1974). The majority of the older population has not yet ventured into formal education.

Meeting the needs of today's older learners presents a challenge for

education and educators. "Adult education is big business," according to the Executive Director of the Adult Education Association of the United States, Linda Harstock. The popular term "lifelong learning" has taken on new meaning for a large segment of the older population. Education is viewed as an active course of intellectual growth and awareness throughout the life cycle. Older people are being encouraged to return to academic pursuits and educational course work. Lifespan education, which has long been talked about, is now being promoted as the vehicle providing the necessary resources for intellectual and psychological coping skills for the older person.

The lack of educational participation by this age group is of concern to adult educators. Heisel(1980) summarized his study of older adults by writing:" We have to know more about them: we must make adult education one of the vehicles through which they can be brought back into the mainstream of society. "(Heisel, 1970, p.135). According to the census of 1970, two thirds of those over sixty-five did not continue their education beyond the eighth grade. The older the person is today, the less education he/she may have. What can be done to encourage the older adult to return to the classroom and to feel secure, once in that setting?

If they become motivated, the older adult appears willing to learn and "eagerly enters into classroom interaction..." (Caro-Capolungo, 1978,p.2). This eagerness can influence their adjustment to the environment. The stimulation and encouragement received from the other students and from the instructor will contribute heavily to their renewed interest in furthering their education. Institutions of higher learning have a responsibility to upgrade the education of older adults so that they can become more satisfied with themselves and with the relationships they have with others.

Throughout the life cycle there is a strong need to communicate with others. For senior citizens, the need may be even greater when their communication opportunities are limited due to the loss of valued others.Despite their fears of being associated with stereotypical perceptions of old age, older persons select most of their friends from among aging cohorts (Rosow,1967).As viewed by Neugarten and Hagestad (1976) age becomes the most important criterion for communication partners because other roles (occupational, etc.) are no longer present. A preference for communication partners may be based on elements of familiarity and similarity of attitude, age, and experience (Tamir,1979). Attention to these elements may lead to a strong preference for someone their own age as a communication partner.Our society is age-graded and the effect of finding such a partner in the classroom can be influenced by the presence of aging cohorts in the role of students or instructor.

Older learners are not retiring from something but retiring to a new form of educational involvement.Their desire to learn seems to predict the kind of adjustment they can make to the aging process and to retirement (OMeara, 1977). Although for some elderly persons the reluctance to participate in formal learning increases with age, such reluctance may be attributable to preferences for an older cohort as a strong support in the role of instructor or communication partner. Investigating whether such a variable appears significant for this population may hold the key to their future involvement in education.

Review of Literature

Introduction

Before educators can begin planning models or methods to incorporate the older (age 55 +) learners' attitudes regarding instructor age preferences into the classroom, it is necessary to investigate the results of studies concerned with educational opportunities and attitudes toward education, and in particular, instructor age preferences of this population group.

This chapter is therefore divided into the following sections: first, a history of recent educational theory leading to opportunities for older students; second, an overview of the potential benefits for older students' entry into the college classroom; and last, a section devoted to specific studies related to expressed age preferences of older students about their dealings with professionals, especially those in the education profession. Following the third section a summary of the major findings for this study will be discussed.

Recent Theory and Educational Opportunities for Older Learners

The nineteen seventies were a period of rapid development for new adult education programs. It was Freire's (1973) phrase "education for critical consciousness" which was used to describe education for the older citizen. The Older Americans' Comprehensive Services Amendment made available to older people comprehensive programs in education, health, and social services. Also in this period, the writings of Malcolm Knowles brought to the forefront the idea of a new educational population -the older adult. Malcolm Knowles' "Andragogy" model (1973) emphasized that there is a new form of pedagogy which should be developed to aid the older person entering, or re-entering education. Knowles' model

helped to introduce new terms into adult education research and practice. Andragogy was defined by Knowles as the art and science of helping adults to learn. With Knowles' blessing, other adult education researchers advised faculty to involve older learners continually in the educational process to provide more student input (Conter and Porcelli, 1981). The needs of the older learner were viewed as different from those of any other age learner and hence, the way in which instruction and teachers viewed older learners was to be carefully studied. Due to Knowles' writings and the active publication of a large number of studies dealing with adult education, by 1974, one out of every five colleges and universities had begun planning programs for the older person.

The year 1975 introduced Elderhostel programs for older people, thereby creating a national network of educational week-long residencies on college campuses, which now boasts of 55,000 attendees annually. Elderhostel has expanded into the international scene and is constantly adding to its course offerings. To bolster further older adult enrollment in education, the 1976 Higher Education Act Amendment Title 1 established a lifelong learning program for adults who left the established sequenced educational system. Two years later, the Educational Facilities Laboratory published The Graying of the Campus which included the following statement: "Older students can help to defuse the enrollment time-bomb set to go off in 1980 ...we're running out of kids to teach" (Weinstock, 1978,p.12).

By 1981 5% of the elderly were enrolled in full-time educational programs or were taking courses in a non-traditional setting (Furchtgott and Besemeyer, 1981). (It is interesting to note that this is the same percentage of the elderly who reside in institutions in the United States). During the nineteen eighties, early retirement has been emphasized with its accompanying increase of leisure time. For many early retirees, education is viewed as a way to acquire

training for a second career. The successful older person of the eighties, profiled in Leich and Pieper's (1982) study, was described as young- old, female, and highly motivated .

Studies Related to Educational Benefits for Older Learners

Why should older people be turning to education? Research suggests that a significant relationship exists between education and aging adjustment (Wolfe, 1963). Education enables people to make informed decisions as they adjust to changes brought on by the aging process. It is further suggested that educated older persons may face fewer crises during retirement years in contrast to those people without additional education (Peterson, 1971).

Education can also assist the elderly to satisfy what McCluskey (1971) identified as the four needs of the elderly: coping, expressive, contributive, and influence needs. All four can be directly attributed to educational opportunities providing for successful interaction with peers. "Institutions of higher education may be the best vehicle for providing activities to satisfy the personal fulfillment needs of older persons" (O'Donnell, 1980, p. 74).

However, when the idea of returning to education is proposed, many older persons disregard its possible impact on their lives (Peterson, 1974).In 1980 less than 2% of senior citizens had enrolled in institutions of higher learning (Lovell, 1980, Marcus, 1978, Shepherd,1980). Attitudes of older generations may have an impact on their decisions to return to the educational environment. Among major reasons cited are their previous dissatisfaction with educational experiences, and the fear of discrimination from younger students on campus (Graney and Hayes, 1976, Marcus, 1978, Peterson, 1978).

Older persons' identification with education in their lives is a reflection of past experiences. During the depression years, economic necessities did not include education. Moreover, having worked all their lives, many elderly regard

the classroom as equivalent to another type of work. Added to all these reservations is their negative outlook on the active discontent of some college students and their "different" behavior which makes some older people feel inadequate to adjust to the educational environment (Hruby, 1980). "Older students are sometimes left to feel as if they've been dropped into an era that isn't theirs" (O'Neil, 1984, p.14).

Because age discrepancy is so visible on campus, older students may seek generous support in order to avoid feeling out-of-place. Researchers have reinforced the need for supportive relationships for older students (Palmore and Luikart, 1972). The adequacy of social contacts in old age has been correlated with the individual's perceived satisfaction with life. "People who continue to function in interactive relationships and are alert to daily happenings are constantly learning" (Hartford, 1973, p.9).

The "graying of the campus" is a relatively recent phenomenon, related to rising educational levels of the elderly. Between 1970 and 1983 the median level of education for seniors increased from 8.7 years to 11.0 years, with the percentage of those who finished high school at 46%. In 1983, about 10% of the older people had four or more years of college (AARP, 1984). At present, almost every State has provisions for some type of waiver for senior citizens as students (Long and Rossing, 1978, 79; Long, 1980).

The higher the level of formal education a person achieves the more likely a person is to participate in further education (Havighurst, 1976). Thus it seems that older people will increase their educational participation as their over-all educational level rises. The college campus is seen by many as the ideal environment for stimulating minds, presenting an active setting, and offering intellectual content and productive interaction time (Cropley, 1976; Long, 1979; Wolvin, 1984).

Research studies on the older learner reinforce the major theme that the desire to learn predicts the kind of adjustment a person makes to the aging process (O'Meara, 1977). The more education acquired, the easier the adjustment to aging and the more positive the person becomes about gaining additional education. The results of Auerbach and Levenson's study (1977) further suggests that the higher the person's level of education the more positively perceived the older person is likely to be. Repeatedly the literature reinforces the value of education in all stages of life, and in partcular, during the "golden years" (Butler, 1975; Jessup, 1969). People with a purpose, a goal, and an educated and organized daily life, live longer, appear to be healthier and happier than those who aimlessly wander through old age (Ubell, 1984).

The educational status of older people appears to exert a powerful influence on a person's perceived social isolation feelings as well (Goldfarb, 1963). It has been suggested that people who are motivated to seek approval from others seek settings where acceptance is likely (Beatty and Payne, 1983). The classroom is certainly an acceptable environment to evoke support, and is commonly self-selected by specific approval-seeking personalities. Older people who enjoy interaction with peers and who have had successful previous educational experiences may well find the classroom a successful and supportive setting.

The diversity of the aging population makes it difficult to advocate the classroom as the most supportive area for <u>all</u> seniors. As Taroule (1980) states: "... older persons deserve an uncommon amount of support from professors and peers with whom they can share... and gain support and understanding" (p.27). It is clear that peer presence is another supportive element for older students (Siegel and Siegel, 1957).

<u>Studies Related to Age Preferences of Learners</u>

Recent research (Smith et al ,1981) shows a strong interaction between

subjects' education levels, and ages, when faced with decreased communication opportunities. Even better educated adults report being significantly affected by fewer interaction opportunities, much more so than college students under the same conditions (Altman, 1975; Smith, Reinheimer, and Gabbard-Alley, 1981). From additional studies (Bauer and Okun, 1983; Palmore and Luikart, 1977) it appears that having adequate interaction with same- age cohorts contributes to a more positive attitude in older persons about their lives and the aging process.

Specific Age-Related Studies

In searching the literature to investigate whether instructor age appeared to be a significant variable for older persons, several studies appear important. Rindskopf and Charles (1974) study used 40 female subjects with both old and young instructors to discover learners' age preferences for teachers. Young and old subject populations were manipulated so that both teacher and learner were in the same age groups. Four instructors chosen for younger subjects were male graduate assistants. Four older instructors chosen were active, retired male professors. The task was a synonym generation exercise for the instructor to teach metric elements. Verbal and nonverbal instructor cues were carefully rehearsed for teaching presentations made to groups of five learners. Each teacher alternated between teaching a young and then an older group. Rindskopf and Charles' conclusions were that "... in a limited context, at least, older learners may profit equally from instructors of various ages" (p.482).

Instructor age did appear as a significant element in King's (1955) study where the training of elder rural craftsmen and their instructor evaluations varied with the age of the instructor. Older instructors received more favorable results and evaluations. This study, in conjunction with Kagan's (1967) theory on the importance of attention-getting cues of instructors, led to the suggestion that students learn more if they identify closely with an instructor similiar to

themselves. A primary example cited was the teaching of retirement information to older students. Kagan argued that the information is ineffectively received unless the teacher has experienced or is close to the retirement condition. Both King's and Kagan's research fit into the present study's hypothesis that both age and expressed aging adjustment are weighted significantly by older subjects in favor of the older instructor.

In addition, using older students as peer partners in the classroom, Myers' (1977) findings suggested that older people become less stressed in the classroom with older associates. Williams (1958) matched a group of young and old subjects in terms of their attitudes toward old people. Those who rated their own health as good had more favorable attitudes toward older people in different occupations than those whose health was rated poor. In the present study it is further predicted that an older learner will perceive an older teacher to be a more supportive instructor than a younger instructor.

Even though King's (1955) study suggested that sex was an unimportant variable, its influence in cross-sex manipulation (the sex of the learner opposite to instructor sex) may be more powerful in the minds of older learners. In Rindskopf and Charles' study, the older subjects were happy with all instructors, unlike the younger subjects who strongly preferred the older male instructors. That study used only female subjects. In the present study, the use of college age students as a comparison group may display any sex differences as being correlated with younger students' age preferences.

Age preferences of black and white subjects for the various helping professionals, including teachers, were examined by Furchtgott and Besemeyer (1981). Correlations between age preference and respondents' age varied, depending upon sex. Generally older subjects preferred older professionals, with those subjects of lower educational levels showing higher age preferences. This

study will look at socioeconomic status as a variable in determining attitudes of older students. Sharing common values and attitudes seemed to lead to preferences for older instructors in the Furchtgott study.

Perceptions of age-preferred competence was also established in business studies. Gadel (1964); and Evans (1963) did studies with insurance salesmen which concluded that salesmen were more likely to sell to clients whose ages were nearer their own. "If older individuals prefer to receive professional services from older profesionals...such services will be received better when delivered by an older individual" (Furchtgott and Busemeyer, 1981, p. 92). The American society tends to be age-graded. People find that their affiliation groups, close friends and professional associates are commonly selected among those in the same age range as they are. The educational environment may well reflect this also.

In contrast, the only research studies that have reported faculty age preferences weighted toward younger teachers speculated on the greater attitude flexibility of younger instructors toward older learners versus older instructors' attitudes regarding aging learners (Barnes, 1979, 1980). Barnes believed that younger teachers are less critical of older students due to the lack of stereotyping attitudes toward the elderly which they display. Barnes' suggested that older students may, therefore, prefer younger teachers because they reflect more positive attitudes about the older learners' abilities.

Older persons who have been research subjects working with craftsmen as teachers have showed a strong preference for older teachers (King, 1955) in a rural community senior center. In an extensive study dealing with different professionals as service providers, older persons also expressed a strong preference for instruction and services from same-age cohorts, including teachers (Furchtgott and Busemeyer, 1981). In addition, studies exploring attitudes of older clients to insurance salesmen also demonstrated preferences for older

rather than younger salesmen (Evans, 1963, and Gadel, 1964). Although not within an academic environment, Presseys' (1972) institutional study revealed decided preferences for older counselors among older patients. Clearly there appears to be a preference for older "authority figures" expressed by older people in varied situations.

Summary

After an extensive search of the literature, Barnes' studies (1979, 1980) seem to present the only strong minority view emphasizing a younger faculty member's more flexible view of older learners, which may, in turn, influence older students to prefer younger rather than older teachers.

In contrast, the majority view is reflected in the literature by King (1955), working with rural elder craftsmen; Furchtgott and Busemeyer (1981), studying age preferences of older persons for helping professionals; early marketing and sales studies of Evans (1963) and Gadel, (1964) demonstrating preferred sales with same- age clients, and the Presseys' (1972) study of older institutionalized persons' preferences for older counselors. Further support for the present study which will examine the expressed age preferences of older students for their instructors, has been suggested by Meyers' (1977) findings that older students feel less anxious when working with aging cohorts in the learning environment.

Previous studies have used only female students as subjects (Rindskopf and Charles, 1974) or narrowed their forcus on the type of task required of older students (King, 1955; Rindskopf and Charles, 1974) or limited the age of the instructor evaluated as in the Presseys' (1972) study. Before educators communicate and enforce any of these results there appears to be a need to establish more information on adult learners' attitudes and age preferences toward their instructors. It is hoped that the results of the present study will

help to substantiate the need for a more specific connection between older students' perceptions concerning age preferences for instructors and any correlation which may exist with the older learners' expressed adjustment to the aging process.

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine whether older learners have a greater preference for older college instructors than do younger college learners. In addition, the investigator examined the relationship between these attitudinal preferences for older and the younger learners' preferences for older teachers and correlated these preferences with learners' expressed adjustment to the aging process. For the study, an attitude survey was generated to tap the older learners' instructor - age preferences and the preferences for older persons in general . Preferences of younger age students were used to compare attitudes toward older instructors. T-tests were administered to determine the mean significance of these differences.

The majority of aging research studies employ attitude scales. The utility of such scales is well-known. The attitudes of older versus younger learners regarding the preferred age of college teachers in this study were examined by using such an attitude scale. A search of the literature presented evidence that older persons seemed to prefer the educational support of same-age or older cohorts. In this study, the older person's expressed adjustment to aging was also correlated with the person's age preference for instructors in the college classroom.

The investigative process included the induction period, gathering of the data, evaluation, measurement and verification of the data, revision and then validation of the final instrument.

Sample

In order to examine the older person's attitudes, the most appropriate

choice of research subjects appeared to be mature Americans who had been, or were currently enrolled in college classes. Three hundred two "Age Instruction Surveys" were given to diverse groups of different aged learners. Initially, research subjects were drawn from a sample of twenty-four West Virginia University and Carlow College Elderhostel participants, thirty-four older West Virginia University students,eighty- five students enrolled in a West Virginia University Speech Communication Extension course in Parkersburg, West Virginia, and one hundred and fifty-nine Senior Center participants from Morgantown, West Virginia and a nearby community - California, Pennsylvania.

Forty surveys were not used because subjects did not completely fill out the instruments. Two hundred and sixty- two subjects were finally selected and represented a wide variety of socioeconomic lifestyles and interests. They were divided initially into two general age groups: the older learners group (those age 50 and over) who were made up of age categories 3 (50-59), 4(60-69), 5 (70-79), and 6 (80 plus), and the younger learners group (those age 25 to 49) in age categories 1 and 2 . The choice of the two groups was suggested in order to provide comparability in terms of their educational involvement and attitude preferences concerning college instructors.

Instrumentation

A review of the literature on older adult learners suggested that they may have the following characteristics and preferences: an eagerness to learn material which they consider meaningful in their present lifestyle, particularly when the information is communicated by a credible teacher; a general apprehension about returning to the classroom, often based on past academic experiences or a lack of same; timidity about being in a classroom with those younger than they; and often, a distrust for younger students who may be

perceived as having stronger abilities and academic credentials than they have. Studies which appear to support these characteristics are described in the previous chapter and include Barnes (1979, 1980); Furchtgott and Busemeyer (1981); Kagan (1967) Meyers (1977), and Rindskopf and Charles (1974). These studies suggest that older students appear to gain more support and comfort in the classroom from the presence of older or same-age peers and instructors.

Taking these findings into consideration, oral interviews were conducted with older students in the Communication and Aging classes, and older persons on committees at the University Gerontology Center. Survey items were drawn from the content of the interviews and in consultation with staff of the Gerontology Center and faculty in the Speech Communication Department. An original instrument was developed which asked older college students to respond to statements about age preferences for college teachers, perceived self adjustment to aging, their perceptions about how society seemed to treat them at this stage in their lives, and the possible effect their age had on their attitudes about teachers and older persons in the college classroom.

Therefore, in order to measure the attitudes of older learners regarding age preferences for college instructors, an attitudinal survey consisting of thirty-two items was created with the expert assistance of Dr. James McCroskey, Chair of the Speech Communication Department and author of numerous attitude scales. The instrument was initially tested with three experts and then further revised according to their suggestions. The purpose of submitting the scale to them was to verify the usefulness of the items.

Next, the instrument was pretested with a group of twenty-five college students in a class in Communication and Aging, and with a group of fifteen older students. On the basis of their responses, the 32 item instrument was further

revised to its present form of twenty-five items. Seven of the original items were deleted due to inappropriate or ambiguous wording. Fifteen items were directly concerned with preference for older teachers, three items requested demographic information and remaining items were concerned with the subjects' personal adjustment to aging.

All scale items had a five point spread to which subjects responded by selecting one of the following options: 5) strongly agree, 4) agree, 3) undecided, 2) disagree, or 1) strongly disagree. Of the total twenty-five items on the scale, the first fifteen were specifically designed to assess age preference attitudes, whereas seven items were designed to examine the learners' perceived personal adjustment to the aging process. Information on subjects' sex, status, and age classification provided the demographic data.

Instrument statements seemed to cluster around three categories based on content: first, the learners' age preferences for instructors and second, the learners' age preferences for same-age or older persons, (including older teachers) ,and third, the learners' perceived adjustment to aging.

Item Analysis and Reliability

In order to test each item's internal consistency,a frequency of responses was obtained by a detailled item analysis . Likert(1932) characterized a good item as one which showed significant discrimination between scores yielded by the item for the high scoring group and scores yielded by the low scoring group. The individual items must discriminate to a significant degree. A summary of each item's mean, standard deviation, and variance can be found in the Appendix.

To examine the reliability of the instrument, Pearson Product Moment Correlations were conducted between each of the items and the major variables in the study (OLTCH, OLPER2, ADTOT) to determine which items were most closely correlated with each variable.

Originally, fifteen items had been selected to represent the Preference for Older Teachers. After items had been examined for weak discrimination powers and reliabilities computed, a twelve item scale was finalized for the Preference for Older Teachers. From item analysis , six items highly correlated with the major variable. Means for the six items ranged from 3.08 to 3.87. Standard deviations were about equal from 1.00 to 1.14. This variable, labelled OLTCH, had the highest correlation score with its secondary variable, APOD (.939).

For the Preference for Older Persons variable, item 4 had the lowest correlation (-.008) and did not appear to agree with any of the other scale items. With item 4, reliability for the original variable was computed at r =. 713. When item 4 was removed, reliability was improved (r =.780).Seven items were retained, representing the Preference for Older Persons . A range of means for the variable was from 3.02 to 4.06. Standard deviations were between .91 to 1.18.

Ajustment to Aging began as ADJAG with seven items including item 22.This item produced negative correlation scores with all scale items and as a result, was then isolated to form its own variable ,representing subjects' personal reactions to their own aging. The six remaining items had a range of means between 3.36 and 4.05. Standard deviations were from .94 to 1.14.

Reliability coefficients were computed on subjects surveyed as follows : for the Preference for Older College Teachers, r =.794 ; for the Preference for Older Persons,r =.780; for Adjustment to aging, r =.604.

HYPOTHESES

In order to examine age preferences of older and younger college students the following null hypotheses were generated : Hypothesis 1- There was no significant difference in the mean preference for older teachers scale between older and younger college students' preferences . This hypothesis suggested that both older and younger students would have similiar mean scores related to their

preferences for older instructors.

This hypothesis was tested twice, with two different age divisions of "OLD" students using a t test. Preference for older teachers, labelled OLTCH, was the major variable in the study consisting of six items. Another variable, labelled APOD also reflected younger students' choices of older teachers and consisted of six items also, four of which appeared in OLTCH. If any conflict appeared between the scores of OLTCH and APOD, the OLTCH scores were preferred for this study.

Hypothesis 2- There was no significant difference in the mean preference for older persons scale (OLPER2 or APEV) between the scores of younger and older college students. This hypothesis suggested that both younger and older students would have similiar mean scores related to their Preference for Older Persons , (including older teachers). This hypothesis was tested twice with a t test using two different age divisions . The major variable for discovering a Preference for Older Persons was OLPER2, consisting of seven items . APEV, a secondary variable reflecting the same preference, had only five items including item 10 (not included in OLPER2) . If a conflict occurred between the two variables' scores, OLPER2 was preferred for this study, as it appeared to be more tightly constructed.

Hypothesis 3- There was no difference in the relationship between subjects' adjustment to aging scores (ADTOT) and subjects' mean scores on preference for older college teachers (OLTCH). Both younger and older college students' Adjustment to Aging scores were not related to their scores showing Preference for Older College Teachers. This hypothesis was tested with Pearson Correlations.

Analysis of Data

The data was analyzed using the Statistical Analysis System (SAS) (5.08) on the Wylbur Network through the West Virginia University Computer facilities. In order to test hypothesis 1, a two-tailed T-test was run to examine the mean difference between younger and older students in the sample on the major

Preference for Older College Teachers (signficance set at .05 alpha level). Two different splits of subjects' ages were used: the variable AGEGRP divided the young (ages 49 and under) from the old (ages 50 and over), and then AGEGRP2 divided the young into a large group (ages 25 to 59), separated from the old (ages 60 and over). The difference between the two groupings was the different way in which "young" and "old" labels were applied to their age divisions.

In order to test hypothesis 2, another two-tailed T-test was run to examine the mean difference (alpha set at .05 level) between younger and older students and their Preferences for Older Persons (OLPER2). Again, an age split was used to divide the young students from the older students.

In order to test hypothesis 3, the Pearson Product Moment Correlation between subjects' Adjustment to Aging and their Preference for Older Teachers was computed.

AGE,a primary demographic variable describing the research subjects, was identified in question 25. Six possible categories were listed, starting with the first category (under age twenty-five), and ending with the last category (eighty plus). Sex and Socio-economic Status (SES) were two additional demographic variables composed of one item each. The label, OLCATEG,was applied to one item (23) which suggested how subjects viewed their age as being either "young" or "old".

The combined attitudinal preference for older instructors and older people was labelled AGEPREF. Six different age categories (listed in question 25) were divided to reflect one of two groups; either (1) a young group, ages 25 to 49, or (2) an old group, age 50 and above, both labelled AGEGRP. Another division of age as young -ages 25 to 59, and old- ages 60 and over , was also created and labelled AGEGRP2. This was a primary age division for purposes of this study.

In addition to these hypotheses the following questions were posed: (1) what is the relationship between subjects' ages and their mean scores for preference for older teachers (OLTCH and APOD)? (2) Is there a relationship between subjects' perception of aging scores (R22) and Preference for older teachers, for age categories (AGEGRP2 and AGEGRP)? (3) Are OLTCH and OLPER2 different or similar variables? (4) Is AGE Level related to Adjustment to Aging scores?

Additional Questions Data:

An analysis of variance was computed with the same variables for Hypotheses 1 and 2 to check results of the T-tests. Duncan's Multiple Range Test was used to identify the specific areas of relationship between variables in both the six categories of age (see item 25) and in the collapsed age groups (AGEGRP and AGEGRP2). Additional analyses of variances were run between AGE and ADTOT to determine how strongly AGE and ADTOT correlated with each other, (see H.3) and if there was a significant difference in their means.

Senior citizens are usually considered to be at least sixty years of age, although older people may begin to feel "old" when they reach their middle fifties. Research suggests that during the middle period of their fifties, many older persons begin to reflect on their own aging, and may become sensitive to the label "old". A General Linear Models Procedure was run between AGE and OLTCH to see whether the relationship was linear or non-linear. Questions 1 and 2 were answered by examining the correlations between variables described in each question, and by the general age categories of young and old. Correlations between perception of aging (R22)and OLTCH were examined to answer question 3 concerning their relationship for the age groups. Question 4 was answered by correlating the adjustment to aging (ADTOT) scores for the separate age groups.

The following variables were created to evaluate the presence of possible correlations in the data set: ADTOT was the revised result of the initial TOT

variable. ADTOT was generated from six items which appeared to identify subjects' attitudes about their perceived adjustment to aging (items 16,17,18,19,20,24). The subjects' adjustment to aging was correlated with the two variables which described the preference for older teachers (OLTCH and APOD). OLTCH ,the preference for older teachers, was generated from six items (1, 3, 7, 9, 10, 14) and APOD,the preference of younger students for teachers older than themselves, was generated from six items (1, 3, 6, 9, 12, 14). In an examination of item responses OLTCH appeared to be the stronger variable.

The preferences for older persons in general,(OLPER2), was correlated with what appeared to be a weaker variable measuring a preference for older persons closer to the subjects' own age (APEV). The number of items included in the variable was seven. OLPER2 generated information on subjects' attitudes toward older persons in general.APEV scores displayed a preference for older persons including teachers, and was generated from five items (5, 7, 10, 13, 15). Both OLPER2 and APEV were considered a measure of the preferences for older persons.

RESULTS

Introduction

The Instructor Age Instrument was created by the researcher to reflect (1) Preferences for Older College Teachers by both older college students and younger college students , and (2) Preference for Older Persons as expressed by older college students and younger college students ,and (3) the subjects' Adjustment to Aging. The original Instructor Age Instrument consisted of 25 Likert- type scaled items.

The results of two tailed *t* tests computed for hypotheses one and two are reported. For the primary variable for hypothesis one ,Preference for Older College Teachers , *t* tests were run for the separate age groups, AGEGRP2 which was defined as (Young-ages 26-59, and Old-60 plus)and AGEGRP defined as (Young-ages <25-49, and Old- 50 plus) . The older age spread in AGEGRP2 was the primary group upon which hypothesis one was based, as the researcher was interested in the senior citizen, as defined by age sixty plus.

For the primary variable for hypothesis two, Preference for Older Persons (OLPER2), *t* tests were also used for the young and old in the separate age groups, AGEGRP2 and AGEGRP . AGEGRP2 was again the primary one upon which hypothesis two was based. The reason for having two different age divisions of the old as fifty plus and sixty plus was to determine whether the ten year age span made any significant difference in their responses.

For hypothesis three, the results of Pearson correlations were reported to examine the relationship between Adjustment to Aging and the primary variable, Preference for Older Teachers.

HYPOTHESES RESULTS

Hypothesis one stated that there was no significant difference in the mean preference for older teachers' scale between older students and younger students. AGEGRP2, which defined Older students as sixty plus, as compared with Younger students between the ages of twenty-six and fifty-nine , was the primary age division of interest , although a second age division, AGEGRP Young (less than twenty-five through age forty-nine),and the Old(age fifty plus) was also examined. T tests were calculated for both the major and secondary variables for Hypothesis one with the two divisions of each age group. Differences in the major variable (OLTCH) and the secondary variable (APOD) scores were reported for the Older age group (t=.4784,p=.63) and with the secondary variable,APOD (t=.3626,p =.72).

Table

T Scores for Preference for Older Teachers For Two Age Groups

(60 plus defined as Older Group)

	OLTCH					APOD			
AGEGRP2	N	MEAN	SD	t	AGEGRP2	N	MEAN	SD	t
26-59	138	20.88	3.73	.4784	26-59	137	21.18	3.58	.7172
60 plus	121	20.60	5.23		60 plus	119	20.99	4.67	

Table

T Scores for Preference for Older Teachers For Two Age Groups

(50 plus defined as Older Group)

OLTCH					APOD				
AGEGRP	N	MEAN	SD	t	AGEGRP	N	MEAN	SD	t
25-49	109	20.50	3.40		25-49	108	20.91	3.28	
				-.7946					.5156
50 plus	150	20.93	5.14		50 plus	148	21.23	4.64	

As a result of the t tests, no significant difference was found for Hypothesis one. The secondary variable (APOD) scores are found in the Appendix.The null hypothesis was accepted as stated : There was no significant difference in the mean preference for older teachers' scale between older college students and younger college students.

Hypothesis two stated there was no significant mean difference between scores of older and younger college students in their Preference for Older Persons. The Older students (sixty plus)in AGEGRP2 were the primary group of interest. T tests results calculated for this age group were (t =.3012,prob.= .7635) and for the Younger division of AGEGRP,(t = - 1.131, prob.= .2590). Mean scores were also examined for the secondary variable (APEV) with a t test to evaluate differences between the two age group divisions (for the Younger AGEGRP, t= 1.247, overall Mean= 20.180, N = 111, p. = .21) and for the Older AGEGRP2,(t =.1672, overall Mean = 20.5071, N = 140, p.= .87).

Those in the OLD division seemed to display greater differences in their preferences for older people than did those in the YOUNG group, although there was no significance between the means for the different age groups.(t=-.167 , t= -1.247). None of the Preference for Older Persons' variables (OLPER2,APEV)or the

composite of the two secondary variables showing Preference for Older Persons or Teachers had significant differences with age groups. Any differences in means were slightly larger with the Younger group although none of the differences were significant (see Table).

Table

T Test Scores For Preference for Older Persons With AGEGRP2

	OLPER2					APEV			
AGEGRP2	N	MEAN	SD	t	AGEGRP2	N	MEAN	SD	t
26-59	139	24.29	4.41		26-59	140	20.51	3.74	
				-.3064					.1672
60 plus	118	24.48	5.43		60 plus	120	20.60	5.00	

T Test Scores With AGEGRP

AGEGRP	N	MEAN	SD	t	AGEGRP	N	MEAN	SD	t
25-49	110	24.00	3.95		25-49	111	20.18	3.37	
				-1.131					-1.247
50 plus	147	24.67	5.49		50 plus	149	20.83	4.97	

Examining means for Preference for Older Teachers by age is reported later in this chapter.

Table

Means for Preference for Older Persons By Age

AGE	N	MEAN
1 (under 26)	1	-----
3 (50-59)	24	26.291
4 (60-69)	48	25.188
5 (70-79)	37	24.297
2 (26-49)	103	24.000
6 (80 plus)	15	22.133

Source	df	SS	M.S.	F
Between	4	209.5084	52.3771	2.223
Within	222	5229.7339	23.5574	
Total	226	5439.2423		

The means for Preference for Older Persons by age levels also showed no significant differences (F= 2.223, df =4/222, P=.06745),and they were not significantly different in any linear fashion in displaying preferences for older persons as subjects aged.

The _t_ tests showed no significant differences and additional analysis produced no significant differences. Therefore,the null hypothesis two which stated there was no significant mean difference between scores of younger and

older college students in their Preference for Older Persons was accepted.

Hypothesis three stated that there was no significant relationship between Adjustment to Aging scores (ADTOT) and subjects' scores on Preferences for Older College Teachers (OLTCH) .This hypothesis was tested with Pearson Product Moment Correlations (r=. 11154,p.=.0929). As a result of the correlations the null hypothesis three was accepted.

Table

Correlations Between Preference for Older Teachers and Aging Adjustment By AGE

AGE	N	r	Probabilities
(1) UNDER 25		------	
(2) 26-49	103	.211	.0323
(3) 50-59	24	.006	.9756
(4) 60-69	48	.008	.9568
(5) 70-79	37	.171	.3105
(6) 80 plus	15	.410	.1285

Additional correlations on these two variables with age groups and age levels were computed to explain the relationship within the age divisions.

Table

Summary of Correlations (Probabilities Below) of Preference for Older Teachers and Aging Adjustment Within Age Groups

AGES	AGEGRP2	AGEGRP	
(1)26-59	.16445	(1)< 25-49	.21438
	(.0636)		(.0289)
(2)60 plus	.08503	(2)50 plus	.04618
	(.4003)		(.6105)

One significant relationship appeared when examining within age groups. For those students between < 25 and 49 there is a significant relationship between preference for Older Teachers and Aging Adjustment. Dividing subjects by specific age levels resulted in the following correlations: age 2 (26-49) had a correlation of .211, age 3 (50-59) had a low correlation of .006 as did age 4 (sixty to sixty-nine). Age 5,(70-79) had a correlation score of .171, and the oldest group (80 plus) had the strongest correlation with Aging Adjustment (.410), but this is not significant due to the samll number (15) of students in this age category.

Hypothesis three had stated there was no difference in the relationship between Adjustment to Aging and subjects' scores on Preference for Older College Teachers. Correlation results were ($r = .11154$, $p. = .0920$). As a result of the correlations, the null hypothesis three which stated there was no significant relationship between Preference for Older College Teachers and the Adjustment to Aging scores of students was accepted.

Analyses of Variance conducted on Adjustment to Aging revealed a significant mean difference on Ajusting to Aging scores for the different aged students (F.= 2.723, df=4/222; p=.0304). These results suggested that Adjustment to Aging may be dependent upon the AGE of the subject.

The results of correlations for hypothesis three suggested another question. Question 4: Did specific age levels have different Adjustments to Aging scores and how did this effect their Preference for Older teachers? Additional correlations on the variables within age groups and age levels were computed to attempt to further explain the relationship between the variables. An additional *t* test was computed and the only mean with significant difference was found between the Young (ages 25-49) and the Old (50 plus) and their Adjustment to Aging scores (*t* = - 3.08, prob. t =.002). Another *t* test was computed for the Older age group and a significant mean difference was found between these two groups on Adjustment to Aging (t = -3.71,prob. t =.001).

QUESTIONS GENERATED

The results of the *t* tests for hypothesis one prompted two questions: (1) Was there a relationship between subjects' ages and the scores for Preference for Older College Teachers? In order to answer that question, five different age levels were examined .

Table

Mean of Preference for Older Teachers By Age

AGE	N	MEAN
3 (50-59)	24	22.875
4 (60-69)	48	21.375
5 (70-79)	37	20.703
2 (26-49)	103	20.592
6 (80 plus)	15	18.800

Source	df	SS	M.S.	F
Between	4	181.7911	45.4478	2.605
Within	222	3872.8785	17.4454	
Total	226	4054.6696		

The range of means displayed above was between 18.8 and 22.9. Age did not appear related to subjects' Preference for Older Teachers. Normal increase in age did not result in a corresponding increase or decrease in subjects' Preference for Older Teachers.

Using *t* tests, no significant relationship of Preference for Older Teachers with age appeared when examining even larger group distinctions between young and old students (AGEGRP2 : *t*= .4784, PROB.>T. =.6329; and with AGEGRP, the younger age divisions, *t* = -.7946, PROB.>T. =.4276). Age did not seem significantly related to Preference for Older Teachers. T test scores suggested that neither age group division showed a significant difference in subjects' Preference for Older teachers.

An Analysis of Variance was conducted with the same variables using age levels (ten year spans) to further examine results of the *t* tests. None of the analyses displayed any significant differences, with Alpha set at .05 level. No significant mean difference was found for Preference for Older Teachers by Age Levels ,($F = 2.605$, $df = 4/222$, $p = .0368$). The null hypothesis one which had stated there was no significant mean difference beween older and younger college students' scores in their Preference for Older teachers was accepted, in the absence of signficant differences among the age levels or between the age groups.(Age level one had one subject and was not included for analysis.)

An additional analysis of the same question about Age and Preference for Older Teachers was conducted with the General Linear Models Procedure. (See Appendix). As a result of that Procedure, the predicted Preference for Older Teachers' score suggested a curvilinear relationship existed between Age and Preference for Older Teachers.

An additional question arose from hypothesis one: Question (2) Was there a relationship between the Perception of Aging scores (R22) and the Preference

for Older Teachers within the age categories? Pearson Product Moment Correlations were employed to answer the question.

For those age 26-49, (N=one hundred and four) the correlation was at a level of .116,and with those age 26-59, (N =one hundred twenty eight) the correlation was .016. Both scores for the age divisions displayed weak correlations for Self Preception of Aging with Preference for Older teachers.

The same variables were correlated for those fifty plus (N= one hundred twenty four) and produced a correlation score of .167. For those sixty plus (N= one hundred)the correlation between Preference for Older Teachers and Self Perception of Aging was .137. This suggested that Self Perception of Aging scores (R22)
for the Older group had only a slightly stronger correlation with Preference for Older Teachers than did the Younger group's scores for the variable (See Table below).

Table

Correlations Between Preference for Older Teachers and Self Perception of Aging

GROUP	CORRELATIONS
AGEGRP=1 (ages 26-49)	.116
AGEGRP=2 (fifty plus)	.167
AGEGRP2=1 (ages 26-59)	.016
AGEGRP2=2 (ages 60 plus)	.137

For both of the age groups there was a weak correlation between Self Perception of Aging and Preference for Older Teachers.Self Perception of Aging scores for both older groups had only a slightly stronger correlation with Preference for Older teachers than did the younger group's scores.

As a result of looking at results of hypothesis one and two,an additional question was posed about the relationship between the two major variables of the study, Preference for Older Teachers and Preference for Older Persons (OLPER2 and OLTCH). Question (3)asked: Were the variables similiar or different from one another? Correlation scores and the results of Duncan's Multiple Range Test Procedure were reported to examine the relationship between the measures.The results of Pearson Correlations between the variables ,and other variables included, and correlations between variables within each of the five age levels (the youngest age level consisted of only one subject) can be found below.

Table

Variable Correlations With Hypotheses 1 and 2 Variables (OLTCH and OLPER2)

H.#	OLTCH (1)Preference-Older Teachers	OLPER2 (2)Preference-Older Persons
ADTOT (3)	.214	.120
OLTCH (1) (3)	1.000	.727
OLPER2 (2)	.727	1.000
APOD (1)	.894	.819
APEV (2)	.807	.924
AGEPREF	.913	.936
AGE	.051	-.076
R22 *	.116	.099

* = Self Perception of Aging

ADTOT = Adjustment to Aging

APOD,APEV = Secondary variables of OLTCH and OLPER2

The two variables OLTCH and OLPER2 were practically independent of Self Perception of Aging. OLTCH was slightly more correlated with ADTOT than OLPER2 was but the evidence from correlations displaying different age levels did not present clear evidence as to whether OLTCH and OLPER2 variables were similiar or different from one another. The over-all correlation between variables was .727. Age was negatively correlated with all the other variables with the exception of ADTOT (.217) and AGEGRP ((.864). This provided the impetus to search further into the relationship of specific ages and Aging Adjustment as posed in question 4. A table examining the results of the Pearson Correlations between these two variables by the five age levels (the youngest level consisted of only one subject) produced the following display.

Table

OLTCH and OLPER2 Correlations by Age Levels

AGE	N	CORRELATIONS
2 (26-49)	103	.73410
3 (50-59)	24	.86167
4 (60-69)	48	.83753
5 (70-79)	37	.79902
6 (80 plus)	15	.71609

Age level 3 (ages 50-59) had the highest correlation (.861) between the variables . Over-all correlation between the variables was .727. Those fifty to fifty-nine had the highest correlation (.861) between the variables.

Although most correlations with other variables appeared similar for the two variables, it is not clear what the definitive answer should be to question three : Were the variables similar or different from one another? Implications of this question can be found in the next chapter.

Correlation Scores and Study Questions

For question 4 about the relationship between Adjustment to Aging and Preference for Older Teachers correlations computed btween the variables for the older group was low (.214). The correlation between ADTOT and OLTCH with subjects ages 26-59 (N = one hundred and twenty-eight) was also low (.164). Both age divisions did not display high correlations between Aging Adjustment and Preference for Older Teachers for the "Young" students sampled.

Aging Adjustment(ADTOT) and OLTCH,Preference for Older Teachers were correlated for those 50 plus (N = one hundred and twenty-four), and the score was .046. This score was compared with correlation between the variables studied and those age 60 plus (.085). Both scores did not correlate strongly between the age groups and the variables. Generally, little difference appeared as a result of dividing the age groups to compute correlations to answer questions raised by the third hypothesis.

Analyses of variance conducted on the hypothesis three variable ,ADTOT, revealed a significant mean difference between ADTOT and AGE ($F=2.723$, $df=4/222$; $p=.0304$). This result suggested that the adjustment to aging may be dependent upon the age of the person.

Tests Computed

When calculating the T statistic for AGEGRP and the following variables (OLTCH,APOD,OLPER2,APEV,ADTOT,and AGEPREF) the only significant difference in means was found between both the young AGEGRP (<25-49) and the old (fifty plus) on ADTOT (their Adjustment to Aging scores), (t=- 3.08, prob.t=.002) (see Table) .

Another set of t tests was computed on the same variables with AGEGRP2. The young were ages 26 to 59,and the old,60 plus. Again,the only significant difference in means was found between the two age groups on Aging Adjustment (t= -3.71,prob. t=001).

Table

Summary of T Test for Differences in Mean Aging Adjustment Scores

AGEGRP			
AGE	MEAN Aging Adjustment		
(26-49)	21.13		
(2) (50 plus)	22.58	t=3.08	P=.0023
AGEGRP2			
AGE			
(1) (26-59)	21.17		
(2) (60 plus)	22.88	t= - 3.71	P=.0003

The age groups had statistically significant differences on the variable, Adjustment to Aging. These means did not change linearly with age.

To further explain and answer question four about the relationship between age category and adjustment to aging, a follow-up examination of mean difference was used. Age level (2) had a mean Aging Adjustment score significantly different from age level(5) ages 70-79. Table

Means for Aging Adjustment By AGE Level

AGE		N	MEANS
1		1	------
2	(26-49)	103	21.162
3	(50-59)	24	21.296
6	(80 plus)	15	22.625
4	(60-69)	48	22.642
5	(70-79)	37	23.239

SUMMARY

Of the two general age groups,Young and Old, the older students seemed slightly better adjusted to aging (ADTOT scores) .Aging adjustment seemed to be dependent upon the age of the person. For the specific age levels, the scores suggested that the extremes of the age spectrum, the young (ages 26-49) and the next-to-oldest (ages 70-79) had significant differences in their mean Adjustment to Aging scores .

T test procedures with APOD,APEV, and AGEPREF (composite score of APOD and APEV), and both older divisions of AGEGRP2 (Old-sixty plus)and AGEGRP (Old-fifty plus) produced no significant mean differences between the following variables: Preference for Older Persons (OLPER2) and the older group (AGEGRP2) (t=.301),and (AGEGRP) (t= -1.13), Preference for Older Teachers and AGEGRP2 ,(t=.478), and

AGEGRP (t= -.795), APOD with the older AGEGRP2 (t=.363), and with AGEGRP (t= .651). The two age group mean scores were not significantly different from each other.

For hypotheses one and two, it appears that no significant difference was found between young and old students in their mean preferences for either older Teachers or older Persons. Dividing the subjects by age also displayed little difference except as specifically noted within each level. AGE was more highly correlated with Aging Adjustment than the young or old divisions of either of the age groups (AGEGRP or AGEGRP2) as diplayed by tables.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the age preferences of older college students for the older college teachers. In order to evaluate their responses a younger student population was employed for comparison purposes. An original twenty-five item attitude scale was designed to represent preferences for older instructors, older people in general, subjects' adjustment to aging , and their self-perception of aging. Reliability was reported for the study's major variables, using coefficient Alpha.

Two hundred sixty seven subjects between the ages of twenty five and eighty plus completed the scales. Older students were the primary group of interest and were defined as those who had taken or were currently participating in college classes. Two age group divisions were used to separate subjects into the fifty- plus category, or the sixty- plus category , in order to analyze any significant differences attributable to the age groupings.

Three hypotheses were generated . Hypothesis one stated that there were no significant differences in the mean preferences for older college teachers for older and younger college students. On the basis of *t* tests computed, the null hypothesis one was accepted. Hypothesis two stated that there were no significant differences in the mean preferences for older persons for older and younger college students. On the basis of *t* tests computed, the null hypothesis two was accepted. Hypothesis three stated that there was no significant relationship between adjustment to aging scores and preferences for older teachers' scores. On the basis of Pearson Product Moment Correlations the null

hypothesis three was accepted.

Results further suggested additional questions which were generated from the hypotheses and answered by using additional analyses. A significant relationship appeared between adjustment to aging scores and age, in general, although separating age groups into specific divisions of young and old did not produce significant differences in scores representing either preferences for older teachers or older persons in general.

When the researcher considered the preference for older teachers' scores by examining different age levels, some distinctions did appear. For those age 50-59, the younger the subjects perceived themselves to be (young, young-old, middle-aged,etc.) the weaker was their preference for older college teachers. The same results were generally true of those age 60-69. Between all age levels those in the younger group (ages 26-49) displayed the lowest correlation scores between the preference for older teachers' variables.The same age group also displayed a lower correlation score among the variables for preference for older persons than any other age level did. In summary, preference for older persons and teachers seemed to be weaker for the youngest college students sampled .The disparity in the numbers sampled of the different ages may well account for a significant part of these results, as mentioned later.

The middle age level (50-59) appeared to have the highest correlation scores for preference for older teachers and preference for older persons (see Appendix). The next age level, 60-69 had the next highest correlation scores for the same variables. For the oldest subjects (80 plus) the preference for older persons' corrrelation with OLTCH was only slightly higher than it was for those 70-79 and higher correlation for preference for older teachers and older persons between the two oldest groups was also non significant. The correlation between

preference for older teachers and preference for older persons for the oldest age group was great enough (.71) to suggest this age group may draw little distinction between their preferences for either older instructors or older persons in general.

Of the specific age levels examined, those age 26-49 and 70-79 displayed the greatest differences in their adjustment to aging scores. These results suggested that different stages of life may influence different orientations to the aging process.

Summary

As a result of this research no significant differences were displayed in older students in terms of either their age preferences for older teachers or for older persons in general. The lack of significance suggested that instructor age may not be considered an important variable for older students. Rather, the preferred teacher may be one who exhibits a high degree of professional abilities and warm interpersonal demeanor, no matter what the age of the teacher is.

The present research demonstrated that the older the students the less likely they were to express a strong preference for older teachers. Increased age of subjects appeared to bring about more acceptance of age as a non-discriminating variable in the evaluation of instructors. Persons age 50-59 who viewed themselves as younger than their chronological age may have temporarily avoided thinking of themselves as "old people" and thus, chose to express a preference for older teachers as people quite different (in their own minds) from themselves. Whatever their reasons for having a strong preference for older teachers, instructors of this age group should be mindful of these expressed age preferences.

In contrast, younger subjects (26-49) expressing a preference for older teachers in this study may have reflected the traditional attitude toward the older teacher as being wiser and more experienced. Kogan (1979) suggested that a study which asked whether both younger or older persons have different attitudes toward older persons may be posing the wrong question. Instead, the correct question should concern the extent of differentiation in their attitudes.

According to Billy Smith (Advanced Study Center Fellow) " By 1990, older students can be expected to represent 47 percent of the credit enrollment in all higher education. " It is hoped that the results of this research have provided an introduction to the examination of attitudes of older college students, which may be useful for college instructors and administrators who will have to deal with this rising new student population.

Discussion

From the results of the current study it was not clear as to whether the two variables, preference for older teachers and preference for older persons were either similar or dissimilar to each other. If considered similiar,then it might be possible to discover an over-all bias of older students toward older people in general, including instructors ,which may occur at certain ages .If the variables are dissimilar, then additional variables should be addressed in future studies to focus on more specific attitudes of older students and their specific reasons for preferring older teachers and older persons. Housing choices, socialization choices ,and organizational choices could be significantly influenced by the knowledge that a large number of senior citizens preferred to interact with their same-age peers in a variety of situations.

The data suggested that those who were most comfortable in their adjustment to aging, as displayed by scores on the variable ,did not express a

significant preference for older teachers. It may well be that as people move into their last years of life they are more at peace with those around them and are less disposed to evaluate others ,particularly in terms of age preferences of professionals with whom they interact. Additionally ,a form of ego-integration and social disengagement thoughts may occupy their minds encouraging them to concentrate more on themselves and less on others .

How an individual perceived her/his own aging did not appear to be highly correlated with the person's adjustment to the aging process. Gerontological research is not prescriptive about the relationship between the older person's self perceptions of aging and the aging adjustment behavior the elderly display(Butler, 1975). This author was surprised that the present study's results did not display a higher correlation between self perceptions of aging and aging adjustment for older students. The reasons for this may be found in the formal nature of the scale and subjects' perception that their answers might somehow directly reflect upon their life style. Research studies concerned with testing the elderly emphasize that apprehension level increases as the "testing" criteria increases. It may be that subjects were reluctant to admit their aging adjustment might be in any way less satisfactory than they answered that it was, or that they felt themselves to be older than they said they felt.

The 50-59 age group scores seemed to suggest that this group has a stronger preference for older teachers and after this age level, the preference weakens. This group is becoming the middle aged in our society due to the expanded life expectancy Americans are experiencing . The older people in this study did not appear to express as strong a preference for older teachers or persons as did the middle age group and also the youngest group, those 26-49.This latter group had the largest number of subjects (103) whereas other groups were

much less (age 50-59 = 24, age 60-69 = 48, age 70-79 =37, age 80 plus = 15). With identical numbers of subjects in each age level, results might be quite different, placing the researcher in a better position to evaluate the implications of subjects' age preferences. Between the last two age levels there was a higher increase in subjects' preference for older teachers than in their preference for older persons but the increase was not significant .This may be due to the fact that more older persons actively enroll in educational classes during their sixties and seventies as compared with those who enroll in classes when they are eighty plus. The lack of strong age preferences of the older students (between the ages of 60 and 80 plus) may be the result of a combination of factors mentioned previously.

Implications and Future Research Recommendations

One of the strongest characteristics of older Americans ,as population researchers describe them, is their heterogeneity. In order to categorize such a large group, authors are prone to treat older persons as though they were all the same.

1. The present study should be expanded to include a greater diversity of older persons in terms of geographical area, educational background, and residential environment. Using only older people who had affiliations with senior groups and who had college classroom experience narrowed the focus of the results.

2. A major limitation of the study was the presence of an unequal number of subjects at the different age levels. The present results should be weighed on the basis of the number of subjects in each category of age,and replication of the study should be done with a more consistent sample.

3. The number of items might have appeared too large for some of the subjects. If possible, a shortened version of the scale might be made. The

present scale could be refined, with sub scales pretested with different age groups. Follow-up interviews might be added to ascertain the expectations older persons have about communicating with different age instructors in the college classrooms.

4. The lack of longitudinal research studies in dealing with the elderly is a continuing problem. Following an intact group of students over a period of time ,with surveys to be completed every five to ten years might offer more specific findings in regard to how age influences older people's attitudinal preferences.

5. The self- report method was the only technique employed in this study. It would be more reliable to observe older students in the classroom situation and survey them then, and also after their class experience to compare the results. Again, prolonging the second survey would be interestng to see whether time influences attitudes about age preferences for older teachers.

6. At present, age levels were designated in ten year spans. Depending on whether an individual was at the beginning or at the end of the span might have made a difference in their responses. There was also no provision made for clarifying the exact age of subjects. Tightening the age levels to five year intervals might produce different results.

7. The difficulties inherent in analyzing preferences for older teachers versus preferences for older persons might have been eliminated if more thorough pretesting of the two variables with a larger number of pilot subjects was undertaken. The results might have been significant if one major variable rather than two separate ones was created .

8. With the present questions it was not possible to discover the extent of the subjects' educational experiences or the subjective impressions they gained.

from past classroom experiences, which may have colored their responses to scale items. New items could be added to ask about subjects' past experiences. The difficulties in identifying and locating older persons as research subjects is a formidable one. The author hopes that as the population ages and discovers the amount of leisure time at their command they will be more willing to participate in exploratory research of this nature. When older students become more visible on college campuses, requesting their research assistance might become an easier task.

Curriculum Implications

Colleges and universities,by and large, have not taken the "gray wave" seriously in the implementation of curriculum changes for the older student. Courses designed for this age group either deal with adjustments to the aging process, or attempt to expand leisure and recreation interests. Elderhostel courses appear to walk on both sides of the tracks by catering to the traditional interests of this group and presenting courses which introduce new ideas and subject matter themes.

Perhaps this variety is wise as few research studies have been published reflecting the expressed education desires of this varied group.In the present study, it appears that older students (50-59) may be searching for different kinds of interactive support from their instructors than are their older peers.To age-grade courses for seniors, in terms of instructor age and the way in which content is presented, may be an answer, yet strong arguments exist for classes which combine different age students and offer more flexible formats .

The fear of the older students, that they cannot compete as effectively against younger students may be off-set by a supportive older instructor and a carefully planned, supportive classroom environment. If younger students were also encouraged to seek out older students for cooperative tasks and research

projects the trust between generations might develop more easily.

Although curriculum specialists may have the primary task of designing the courses, the attitude of college teachers toward older students should also be examined. Only those teachers who express a desire to teach older students should be invited to instruct them. Introductory workshops and pre-semester seminars on " How to Communicate with Older Students " might be appropriate.

On campus ,the amount of attention and positive exposure the older students receive may serve two purposes: (1) to publicize the existence of courses for older students and those who are participating in them (2)to reassure both the young and the old that the college has a desire to make such participation successful.

Both younger and older students might be created to constantly evaluate the program. Hiring an Assistant Student Life Director to handle older students on campus might be a strong suggestion in the light of the findings of this study which suggest that students 50-59 appear to have a strong preference for older instructors. This suggestion follows the findings of Hartford, 1973; Long, 1979; Palmore and Luikart, 1972; Wolvin, 1984, and others who have argued that education is an excellent way for older studetns to spend time ,especially in the presence of supportive aging peers, including teachers. O'Meara's suggestion that adjustment to aging seems dependent upon the desire to learn is further reinforcement for the older students' pursuit of educational goals(O'Meara, 1977). In addition, Meyers' (1977) suggestion that older students were less anxious when working with people their own age in an educational setting might have influenced subjects' responses to items in ths study which asked about their adjustment to the classroom,their own aging,and their attitude toward older teachers and older people.

Although the younger of the two old age groups under investigation in this

study (50-59) appeared to have the only significant preferences for older teachers , the uneven cell size of other age groups may have made the results less applicable to a larger older population. It is hoped that this study will be replicated ,taking into account the recommendations included above.

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